POWERS III, DANIEL GEORGE, M.A. Queer Kairos: Resistance, Resilience, and Hope. (2019)
Directed by Dr. Nancy Myers. 25 pp.

Drawing from Erin Rand's argument in *Reclaiming Queer: Activist and Academic Rhetorics of Resistance*, I detail the resistant manner in which queer emerged in national and academic realms within the late twentieth century. This political and rhetorical resistance, I contend, forms much of the impetus of queer scholarly theory and application, and effectively made queer theory and queer culture resilient to the general normativity surrounding it. In other words, queer became a subject and field of study in postsecondary education simultaneous with the national social and cultural issues of the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, that rhetorical resistance and resilience of the queer social movement became synonymous with academe's subject and field of study in its analysis, critique, and evolution. However, this resistance as it was originally conceived, and on which I argue queer theory is founded, does not account for the inclusivity the LGBT community has begun to experience within the twenty-first century. As queer individuals' lives continue to be validated, as queer individuals continue to live openly today, I offer—in Cheryl Glenn's terms—a "hopeful" outlook for the possibility of queer theory and culture in the twenty-first century through expanding the field to include more literary, cinematic, and other (newer) culturally significant texts produced by queers to move forward in analyzing, more deeply, what is queer.

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POWERS III, DANIEL GEORGE, M.A. Queer Assemblage in *Running with Scissors*. (2019)
Directed by Dr. Benjamin Clarke. 20 pp.

In this paper, I define assemblage and its territorializing forces. In this definition, I show how territorializing forces favor culturally-normative entities and how deterritorializing entities, such as queer, exist through the opposing nonnormative, even bizarre forces. This I apply to Augusten Burroughs's memoir, *Running with Scissors* in which I demonstrate how Burroughs—as author, narrator, and character—narratives his move from "normal" to "queer" ("re-" to "deterritorialized") during his own teenage years, and how it during this dissent that he is able to validate both his own queer/deterritorialized identity and the identity of his text. I ultimately hope to provide a discussion of queer identity construction through queer assemblage, a closer examination of queer content and form through narrative.

QUEER KAIROS: RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE, AND HOPE

AND

QUEER ASSEMBLAGE IN *RUNNING WITH SCISSORS*

by

Daniel George Powers III

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QUEER KAIROS: RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE, AND HOPE

"In 'Rainbow Wave,' L.G.B.T. Candidates Are Elected in Record Numbers": This is the headline of an article published on November 7, 2018, a day after the midterm election in the United States (Caron). Four months later, on March 13, 2019, Representative David Cicilline of Rhode Island introduced to Congress H.R.5 – Equality Act, a bill "To prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, and for other purposes" (United States Congress). In June of 2019, three months after the introduction of Rep. Cicilline's bill and during the writing of this thesis, Obergefill v. Hodges—the Supreme Court case responsible for marriage equality—celebrates its four-year anniversary. It is also noteworthy that the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act celebrates its tenth year of being law. The US during the twenty-first century has certainly progressed in its legal equality for queer rights. Each of these legal decisions reflects a political and cultural move toward inclusion, while allowing for difference in the LGBT community. These legal and political decisions signify a progression of social acceptance, also, of hope for queer rights.

These major shifts in cultural, social, and political thinking reflect the impact of the LGBT movement of the 1980s and 1990s as well as queer theory's inclusion as a subject and field of study in postsecondary education during those decades. Queer theory emerged in the late twentieth century as a fundamentally resistant theoretical

framework—this framework reflective of the LGBT community's resistance to cultural and political issues it faced during this time, namely that of the HIV/AIDS crisis. Indeed, the tragedy surrounding the HIV/AIDs crisis prompted queer people(s) to begin attempting to establish their own rhetorics, laws, and modes of thinking, and today these acts of resistance are represented and explored in the field of queer theory. While queer scholarly theory established and validated itself in academe through its focus on difference, resistance, and resilience, these are not applicable to our society and politics in the same ways today. What began both in the social movement and academe as rhetorics of resistance because of oppression has the potential in this current social moment to expand into what I refer to as a "rhetoric of hope," one that reflects the developments of queer individuals within the twenty-first century. While not rejecting the focus on difference, resistance, and resilience, a rhetoric of hope enables queer theory to explore, analyze, and critique these concepts in alternative ways. To demonstrate this, I identify two cultural and rhetorical kariotic moments of queer, one in the 1980s and 1990s and one today, to address queer's interconnection between society and scholarly theory in the first and to call for that reconnection through a hopeful lens in the second.

Drawing from Erin Rand's argument in *Reclaiming Queer: Activist and Academic Rhetorics of Resistance*, I detail the resistant manner in which queer emerged in national and academic realms within the late twentieth century. This political and rhetorical resistance, I contend, forms much of the impetus of queer scholarly theory and application, and effectively made queer theory and queer culture resilient to the general normativity surrounding it. In other words, queer became a subject and field of study in

postsecondary education simultaneous with the national social and cultural issues of the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, that rhetorical resistance and resilience of the queer social movement became synonymous with academe's subject and field of study in its analysis, critique, and evolution. However, this resistance as it was originally conceived, and on which I argue queer theory is founded, does not account for the inclusivity the LGBT community has begun to experience within the twenty-first century. As queer individuals' lives continue to be validated, as queer individuals continue to live openly today, I offer—in Cheryl Glenn's terms—a "hopeful" outlook for the possibility of queer theory and culture in the twenty-first century through expanding the field to include more literary, cinematic, and other (newer) culturally significant texts produced by queers to move forward in analyzing, more deeply, what is queer.

To make this argument on queer theory's moment to engage in a rhetoric of hope, the concepts of kairos, rhetorical situation, and exigence, make visible the resistant and resilient rhetorics of the 1980s and 1990s as well as the potential of the contemporary moment for queer theory's expansion of subject matter and strategies of analysis. Kairos, at its more fundamental definition, is defined by James Kinneavy as "the right or opportune time to do something, or right measure in doing something" (80). That is, kairos is defined by the ability of rhetor/s to make malleable the time in which they are arguing so that they are able to most effectively reach their audiences. Some of the first queer theorists—like Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and David M. Halperin—took the opportunity of the inopportunities that were afforded the LGBT community during the 1980s and 1990s to produce a theoretical framework that encompassed the

LGBT community's resistant nature—resistant in the basic sense of the word: "that makes or offers resistance or opposition; tending to resist someone or something; unyielding; not susceptible" (Oxford English Dictionary). Of course, Kinneavy notes that "kairos is a complex concept, not easily reduced to a simple formula" (85). Indeed, kairos is often embedded in rhetorical situations; however, elucidating kairos can often reveal, as I demonstrate with queer theory's inaugural decades and today, the opportunities *and* inopportunities within rhetorical situations. As Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee suggest, "kairos requires that the rhetors view writing and speaking as *opportunities* for exploring issues and making knowledge" (41; emphasis added). Their suggestion underscores that kairos refers more directly to the rhetor's opportunity to respond to an exigence within a rhetorical situation.

Kairos, then, is a way of analyzing the factors, or exigences, associated with a particular time, or rhetorical situation. Expanding on Lloyd Bitzer's 1968 definition of rhetorical situation, Keith Grant-Davie contemporizes this concept as "a set of related factors whose interaction creates and controls a discourse" (265).[1] While "controls" appears somewhat aggressive, this word more nearly indicates that rhetors must provide solutions to the exigences they see need attention, or rather, that they see need resolving. Thus, rhetorical situations arise in response to exigences that need resolution—at least according to the rhetors. As Grant-Davie claims, "A rhetorical exigence is some kind of

[1] That is, contemporized compared to what Grant-Davie cites of Bitzer's definition: "A complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence" [Bitzer cited in Grant-Davie (265)].

need or problem that can be addressed and solved through rhetorical discourse" (265). To add kairos into this mix of rhetorical situations and their exigence(s), the opportunity and inopportunity of arguments are directly connected with the ability of the rhetor/s to properly manage the discourse(s) surrounding their rhetorical situation. While the first queer theorists were adept in encapsulating the resistant mentality of the LGBT community to produce a theory that expands the scope of acceptable, valid discourses, the particular survivalist activism of the LGBT community in the 1980s and 1990s is obsolete for many within the community today. While resistance grounded early queer theory, that same resistance does not function in the same manner today. It is because of this that the idea of resistance might be redefined to expand the scope of queer theory moving forward.

The rhetoric(s) of queer theory for this investigation dealing with difference, resistance, and resilience arise in the rhetorical situations of their kairotic moments—socially, politically, and culturally. As rhetorically situated, queer theory in higher education during the 1980s and 1990s responded to the social and political exigences that affected the LGBT community during that time, specifically the HIV/AIDS crisis, and queer theory's proliferation as connected with the activism of the LGBT community was inherently founded upon resistance and resilience. For this contemporary moment in the US, I invoke the same methodology to analyze the current state of queer theory as clinging to this resistance without opening itself to today's activism and social changes. I believe queer theory is—or at least should start—expanding its concept of resistance upon which it was developed to include the rhetorics of hope of this current moment.

Although inopportunity defined the LGBT community's experience and queer theory's framework in the late twentieth century, the resilience[2] of these worked to solidify their resistance. This resilience manifests today to create more opportunity for the LGBT community, an expanding one that queer theory may benefit from.

Queer Theory's Rhetorics of Difference, Resistance, and Resilience

The HIV/AIDS crisis, I believe, forced an activist coalescence of queer peoples to demand political and social acknowledgment during the 1980s and 1990s that ultimately culminated, in the academy, in what became known as queer theory. In *Reclaiming Queer*, Rand argues queer activism as this driving force for queer peoples in the late twentieth century: "This new breed of activism was not intended to promote acceptance or tolerance; its goals were to reclaim loudly and forcefully the gay community's rights to safety and humanity and to forge identity and strength from victimization" (3). Rand interconnects the queer activism of the 1980s and 1990s to the rhetorical agency that is generated through such activism. And while her book is exemplary in its attention to the nuances queer introduces to rhetorical agency, I am more interested in considering, as she does, "what happened" when queer activism produced queer theory and agency (7). That is, how the LGBT community generated a rhetorical situation in response to the exigence of the HIV/AIDS crisis through activism, and how this activism created a unique kairotic moment within postsecondary education where queer theory—queer individuals—began to thrive.

[2] That is, resilience as defined by Elizabeth A. Flynn, Patricia Sotirin, and Ann Brady in *Feminist Rhetorical Resilience*: "[Recognizing] and seizing opportunities even in the most oppressive situations" (8).

The HIV/AIDS epi-/pandemic is still occurring today, though fortunately the morbidity and mortality rates among American citizens has decreased since the late twentieth century.[3] During the 1980s, however, there was nothing fortunate about HIV/AIDS, nor hope for those inflicted. Although the introduction of the disease into the US population remains largely in debate, the rapidity with which HIV/AIDS infected and killed people was staggering: in the 1980s and 1990s, it is estimated that roughly 800,000 individuals contracted HIV/AIDS with nearly half of these contractions ending in death (Center for Disease Control). Of course, I am able to cite such numbers because of the attitudes and feelings that we have today about HIV/AIDS have warranted extensive research regarding the spread and prevention of the disease. During the late twentieth century, however, such statistical numbers really did not exist. Socially and culturally, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was usually associated with the LGBT community, as a higher proportion of LGBT members were observed as infected with the disease. This fact, coupled with (what was perceived as) general homophobia from the federal government and the general public,[4] led to a "sweeping under the rug" of the epi-/pandemic. The blatant ignoring of the health and humanity of the LGBT community during this time prompted, as Rand discusses, a militant resistance from LGBT members, ultimately generating cause for a coalition of queer peoples to demand rights politically and socially. Marches, organizations, and other events became some of the first public domains in

[3] A quick Google search of "HIV/AIDS" provides numerous medical and health organizations that give numbers reflecting the persistence of the disease in the twenty-first century, but typically acknowledge the slower/lesser spread of the disease due to heightened awareness and (ostensibly) proactive treatment.
[4] This is the generalized sentiment behind Randy Shilts's book *And the Band Played On* (1987), often heralded for its attack on the Regan administration's mishandling of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

which the LGBT community demanded rhetorical visibility. It was through these, as well as the queer theory produced simultaneously in the academy, that queer developed as a rhetorical system of resistance.

Rand takes for example in her introduction the activist group Queer Nation and their flyer's title "Queers Read This" that they handed out during the 1990 Gay Pride Parade in New York City. Rand analyzes the intricacy of the (literally) commanding title to argue that it, indeed, names or calls forth queers—the LGBT community—as a people, a recognizable group. It is intriguing that she cites Queer Nation primarily due to its significance in academe, but also because there were many other groups and organizations that were attempting to "name" and "call forth" queers as individuals. [5] As Rand claims, "the formation of groups such as the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), [the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power] ACT UP, Sex Panic!, the Pink Panthers, and the Lesbian Avengers…changed the face of lesbian and gay activism during this period" (3)—though she does not include that several of these groups (excluding GMHC and ACT UP) were founded in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Activism was surely relevant to the LGBT community's situation in the late twentieth century, but a unique academic activism occured with queer people in higher education as well.

As Rand contends in her first chapter, "Staking a Claim on the Queer Frontier: The Debut and Proliferation of Queer Theory," queer theory found itself in a paradoxical moment for its "debut"; or, as I see it, a (queer) kairotic moment. The LGBT community

[5] The first several pages of *Reclaiming Queer* discuss the significance of Queer Nation and this flyer's title to early queer theoretical work.

faced strong opposition socially and politically during the 1980s and 1990s, and in turn became a queer force of resistance, yet resistance had already been dominating parts of critical theory and philosophy in higher education during the late twentieth century with postmodernism (and its decline).[6] The deconstructive, poststructuralist ideas associated with postmodernism were, indeed, popular during the arrival of queer theory, and, because of this, "queer theory made its entrance into academe and quickly established and institutional presence" (Rand 30). Queer theorists—like Butler, Sedgwick, and Halperin—were among the early academics who established this institutional presence. Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) introduced and interrogated the performativity of gender in Western culture(s); Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) questions the binarity of human sexuality (homo- and heterosexuality) to expand upon the current understandings of sexuality; and Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (1990) takes a Foucauldian approach to ancient Greek homosexuality. Early queer scholar's works—including but not limited to those mentioned—worked, as Rand claims, to establish a queer theoretical agenda and thinking within academe that reflected the ideals of the LGBT community.

Early queer theorists and scholars essentially developed methods of interpreting marginalized groups, discourses, etc. like the LGBT community. As Meredith Worthen describes in *Sexual Deviance and Society: A Sociological Examination*, queer theory of

[6] Postmodernism indeed dominated a majority of the academic fields during the 1970s and 1980s with a steep decline in the 1990s. Though I do not wish to overload this paper with a digressive discussion of dominant critical theories, postmodern thought and postmodernism certainly affected academe during the late twentieth century. For further reading, see Calinescu, Compagnon, and Rudrum and Stavris.

the 1980s and 1990s sought to become a methodology that deconstructs existing paradigmatic ideals of social norms, especially those that perpetuate oppressive power dynamics (94). Late-twentieth-century queer theorists focused on analyzing such oppressed individuals and/or groups because of their supposed "sexually deviant" identities. Much like feminist theory of the 1970s and 1980s that attempted to understand the marginalization of people in society based on sex, queer theory attempted to explain those that were marginalized due to skewed social and cultural understandings of sexual and gendered identity categories. Rand claims that early queer theory did not (necessarily) respond to the LGBT community's social and political oppression of the 1980s and 1990s (34-39); however, the explicit ignoring and silencing of LGBT individuals made even mentioning queer issues an act of rhetorical resistance—and early queer theorists did much more than mention.

Early queer theorists embodied the activist resistance of the 1980s and 1990s by not remaining hidden in silence as was expected. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner say that queer theorists enacted a particular form of activism through their "narrativizing," or theorizing, of the queer experience: "[The] notion that this work belonged to 'queer theory' arose after 1990, when AIDS and queer activism provoked intellectuals to see themselves as bringing a queerer world into being" (cited in Rand 36). At a time when the world wanted an absence of "diseased queers," the act of queer scholarship, then, is certainly an act of rhetorical resistance—and a fruitful one at that. Butler's *Gender Trouble* resists the social norms of what she explains as "gender performance": that is, resisting the fixedness of "gender" to claim that this term is socially constructed and,

therefore, "performed" through varying social situations. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick, too, resists the absence of homosexuality (and queer generally) among literature and theory by making it visible in substantiating homosexual individuals and thinking through her discussion and analysis of (what she considers) queer works from the nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. Similar to Sedgwick, Halperin also resists the absence of queer by recognizing the presence of queer—or at least homosexuality—as early as Classical times, thus making queer appear not just a modern phenomenon but a part of human society throughout much of its history. Early queer theorists were resistant in the sense that they were not silent; that early queer theorists, like the LGBT activism of the 1980s and 1990s, fought the oppressive forces surrounding them through speaking about their queer experience. Early queer theorists' work thus functioned as a consolidated body of accepted work regarding queer experience(s).

Resistance thus formed the impetus of (early) queer theory because of the social and political atmosphere from which it arose. Resilience also ensured that queer theory could and would be an acceptable theorization and methodology. During the time of poststructuralist, feminist, and post-colonial theories in postsecondary education, queer theory asserted itself as yet another theoretical framework that addressed the oppression of sexually- and gender-deviant identities. Resistance functioned as a way of responding to the attitudes toward the LGBT community: queer citizens/individuals resisted being silent and, in turn, queer theorists similarly resisted the silence, or absence, of queer thinking. During the mid- and late-1990s through the 2000s, queer theory continued to establish itself within this resistance. Perhaps what queer individuals and theorists could

not predict would be the progressive acceptance of the LGBT community and queer theory alike during the twenty-first century.

The Future Possibilities of Queer Theory's Difference, Resistance, and Resilience

Today, queer theory has what early queer theorists were probably unable to predict: over twenty years of work by numerous scholars and writers interrogating and discussing the concept of queer. Searching the terms "queer" and "queer theory" on the MLA International Bibliography generates, respectively, lists of 6,605 and 2,938 texts.[7] Moreover, since the 1990s, a myriad of undergraduate and graduate courses relating exclusively to queer theory and literature have been taught and taken, and theses and dissertations have been written arguing solely for and about queer theory. As the examples in the introduction illustrate, progressive political agendas have warranted a more acceptable social and cultural atmosphere in the US for queer individuals—including those like myself. Queer theory, politics, and people have, indeed, flourished since the tumultuous times of the late twentieth century, yet current queer scholars are now beginning to ask what queer theory is "doing" today and where will it be going in the twenty-first century. Although such questions are dauting in scope and possibility, I believe queer theory can think (back) to its original resistant attitude to continue the work that it both set out to accomplish and needs to do today.

Rand notes, "queer theory's success should also represent its demise" because, as she cites Butler as suggesting, "normalizing queer would be, after all, its sad finish" (31).

[7] As of June 20, 2019.

Thus, the inherent non-normativity of queer theory makes it so that if it is institutionalizalized, its normalization disables it from its true functionality. In other words, a theory that claims itself to be opposed to normativization cannot (or should not) function within an establishment like the academy that is responsible for producing such normativization. In this sense, I believe queer theory has found itself in a sort of paradox: Queer theory's initial desire to validate itself in higher education would be its birth-death, and so it has existed in a space of perpetual resistance to shifting social, cultural, political, and theoretical paradigms, all the while remaining resilient in its attempt to be accepted. Moreover, early queer theory had the benefit of postmodernism affecting any and all theoretical frameworks during the 1980s and 1990s; today, many scholars and theorists agree that postmodernism has passed, but what exactly followed it during the 2000s or 2010s is currently being questioned.[8] Queer theory seems to be experiencing a sort of identity-crisis, one that is perhaps consequential both of its current state in academe and of the social shifts toward LGBT inclusion. However, I believe queer theory might return—that is remember and reconsider—its resistant foundations to continue its agenda. Today queer theory should remember the resistant and resilient roots from which it formed to expand upon these as a hopeful, challenging methodology in this new kairotic moment.

[8] See for example David Rudrum and Nicholas Stavris's *Supplanting the Postmodern* for an overview of both the waning of postmodernism and several concepts of what follows it; similarly, Robin Van Den Akker, Alison Gibbons, and Timotheus Vermeulen's *Metamodernism* introduces a largely-accepted understanding of twenty-first century critical theory and philosophy.

After the 2016 election, it remains a fact that racism, homophobia, and xenophobia (to name only a few) continue to inhibit inclusivity much in the same ways it did some twenty or thirty years ago. While queer individuals are able to find more inclusivity today politically, socially, and legally, there still exists people and groups that would rather continue to silence them. In other words, the fight is not over. The LGBT community and queer theory must remain as resistant as it was in the 1980s and 1990s—although the LGBT community, queer theory, and their resistance are all different today. This difference lies in the LGBT community and queer theory's resilience to being oppressed or silenced, as evidenced by their persistence as a valid group of people and a field within postsecondary education. The fact that the LGBT community and queer theory remain visible—that their visibility is even greater today—ensures that there is still a necessity for theorizing and analyzing these existences.

Queer theory might continue its agenda by reconsidering the potential, the possibilities of its inherent resistance, especially when thinking that, for one of the first times in history, queer individuals have the opportunity for futures themselves. Michael O'Rourke alludes to this in his question at the beginning of "Roundtable: Are We Queer Yet?": "What future potentiality can be discerned in this present, and what possible futures beyond present recognition might there be…?" (12). Citing Yekani, Kilian, and Michaelis, O'Rourke argues that it is "indeed timely to *re*consider these topics [activism, the political, ethics] that have shaped the queer debate from the outset and thus to project the reiteration of queer moments indefinitely into the future(s)" (14). While activism among the LGBT community is not a militant as it was in the 1980s and 1990s, activism

must continue in order to protect the changes that the first kairotic moment provided. While political strides have been made in the twenty-first century to benefit the LGBT community, bills and laws continue to be passed that threaten the ability for us to live our lives.[9]

Queer theory should remain resilient and continue to resist these social and political issues in a similar manner of the 1980s and 1990s but expand the understanding of this resistance as a "challenging" of normativity. Since the LGBT community and queer theory have worked over the last two-to-three decades to reify their beings—to be understood as humans experiencing a unique vision of their world(s)—their resistance can be reimagined to accommodate this reality that (some) queer individuals are able to openly live their lives without the fears of the twentieth century (or earlier). The queer activist work, both socially and academically, of the 1980s and 1990s produced the twenty-first century world in which I grew up: A world in which I was uniquely able to develop as a queer individual without the consequences many queer people before me faced; a world in which I could say, "I want to write a thesis about the state of queer theory," and am able to do so. Because those before me worked to provide a world in which I can exist, I want to continue to provide understanding of what exactly this world—what queer—is. To do so is not an individual task, nor shall I be able to produce this understanding within one text. Instead, I want to explore how resistance can be expanded to challenge the normativity surrounding our current time, and how this

[9] The ban on transgender people from serving in the military and HB2 in North Carolina are just two examples of such threatening legislature.

expansion might be done so as to induce a rhetoric of hope among queer theory. This should ultimately strengthen queer's resiliency moving forward, as well.

Since the late twentieth century, queer people have begun to represent their experiences through literature, television, and film. While scholars have analyzed these representations through queer theoretical lenses, I find that the accepted "canon"[10] of literary, televised, and cinematic works is highly disproportionate to what is actually available. Early queer theorists were concerned with authenticating the queer experience; today queer theorists might concern themselves with expanding the present representations of queer experience available to them. For example, *RuPaul's Drag Race*'s first season premiered in 2009 and celebrated its eleventh season this past spring. Understood and self-proclaimed as a cultural phenomenon,[11] only nine works are listed on MLA International Bibliography for this television program, even though its tenth season (that aired in early 2018) averaged 469,000 viewers each week (Nolfi). Aside from how little is written about the show, what has been written takes *Drag Race* as a vehicle for other issues like race. Scholars have yet to analyze the show's explicit parody (or uptake) of the (queer) ballroom culture of the late twentieth century LGBT community as seen in *Paris Is Burning* (1990). Nor have they taken issue with the show's

[10] Like many queer theorists, I agree that queer is unable to be normalized or canonized in traditional terms; though I use canon to denote a collection of works that are accepted as relative to particular scholarship, I do not mean to suggest that queer texts can "be canonized."

[11] Trailers and teasers for *Drag Race* over the past two to three years have featured the line, "Get into the phenomenon!"

casting over one hundred homosexual cisgender males while featuring only two transgender women.[12]

Beyond *RuPaul's Drag Race*, other culturally and scholarly significant works are similarly lacking in scholarly analysis and critique. *Call Me by Your Name* (2017), a film based on Andre Acíman's 2007 novel of the same title, grossed nearly $42 million dollars within its first twenty-two weeks at the movie theatre. Only one text appears when searching for the title on the MLA International Bibliography—and this one entry was published in 2017 about the film. There are, to my knowledge, no scholarly texts concerning the literary work. Similarly, Augusten Burrough's 2002 memoir *Running with Scissors* boasts only five entries, three of which analyze the cinematic adaptation of 2003—making the second half of my thesis the third essay about Burroughs's memoir since 2005. *Queer as Folk* (2000-2005) generates a more substantial thirty entries; *Will & Grace* (1998-2006), by itself, claims around three-quarters of the 153 entries; and Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) has around 64 entries, though not all of these appear to exclusively discuss the queerness of the work. Although these are but a few examples of queer works, the analyses regarding them are but few as well. Given queer theory's current desire to question its present state, why not turn to contemporary queer texts? Are these texts—and texts beyond literature, television, and film—not representations of the contemporary queer experience, and should, therefore, be turned to better answer queer's/queers' present state?

[12] Furthermore, though various races and ethnicities have been appeared on *Drag Race*, the winners of each of the eleven seasons plus four "all-star" seasons have all been either black or white.

Already contemporary queer theory is developing a curiosity surrounding the analysis of queer texts or representations. In 2012, Halperin published his detailed analysis of "being gay" in *How to be Gay*—a book that explores the influence of camp and melodrama, for example, on gay men's identities. Beyond Halperin though, other contemporary queer theorists have begun turning to various media(s) to analyze contemporary queerness: Hiram Pérez deals with the role of race in gay modernity in his book *A Taste for Brown Bodies: Gay Modernity and Cosmopolitan Desire* (2015); Shaka McGlotten similarly addresses race and its affect in Internet gaming and dating for queer people in his book *Virtual Intimacies: Media, Affect, and Queer Sociality* (2013); Jasbir Puar argues that race (assembled with other identity categories) and queerness have developed "homonationalist" positions for contemporary queer individuals in her book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007); and José Esteban Muñoz considers queer futurity by recalling its past while also connecting it to visual and performative art of the twentieth century in his book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009). This small sample of twenty-first century queer scholarship I mention primarily to show contemporary queer theory is, indeed, expanding upon its resistant roots in order to more deeply analyze the complexities of contemporary identities. Each selected scholar intermingles canonical and non-canonical texts to expand the understandings and methodologies of queer theories and identities. Furthermore, these scholars also intermingle queer with racial, ethnic, and socio-economic exigences to reflect the conglomeration of these exigences in the contemporary identity.

Queer theory has begun, then, to incorporate itself within the larger debates of academe today—primarily those debates of identity, which have concerned scholars during the twenty-first century as "identity" has become more pluralistic. In this sense, contemporary queer theorists such as those above have begun to think of queer within such pluralism; that is, thinking of queer, of course, as queer, but thinking of it also in relation to other identity categories. Though queer theorists first worked to establish queer as its own individual category, contemporary queer theorists definitely understand queer as a valid aspect of an individual's identity in addition to others. While still resisting normativity, I believe contemporary queer theorists are also embracing the general resistance of flattened identities to demonstrate the diversity of twenty-first century individuals. Moving forward in the twenty-first century, queer theory provides a methodology of such resistance, and can, at the same time, persist in theorizing, analyzing, and ultimately validating the queer people of today for the queer people of tomorrow.

Queer Theory's Resistance and Resilience as a Rhetoric of Hope

This exploration of queer theory as resistant and resilient I offer as conclusive to its (now historical) beginnings and as a kairotic moment of hopeful possibility for its current state and future(s). I believe queer theory finds itself today in the same precarious predicament Cheryl Glenn finds feminism, specifically feminist rhetorical studies. In *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope* (2018), Glenn encourages a collective coalescence of hope in order to interrogate her question, "[What] possibilities might we imagine and work to create for a more equitable future for us all?" (196). I agree with

Glenn's belief that hope—as a method of viewing a current state and future—enables an ability to see possibilities for a future. For Glenn, "The present challenge for feminist rhetoricians is to imagine continued possibilities for allying feminist rhetoric…with mainstream rhetoric and, thereby, further developing rhetorical feminism" (200). Queer theory, then, might ally itself with more diverse subject matters in order to expand the possibilities of both scholarship and public engagement. Queer theory might also benefit from "allying" itself with "mainstream rhetorics," as Gleen suggests, to produce more possibilities for itself within those rhetorics; and this is achievable "[only] by staying connected with one another, staying publicly engaged" (201). This public engagement and diversification of subject matters will ultimately induce the same activist mentality that queer theory is not only founded upon but also demands in its framework—the same activist mentality that the resistance and resilience of queer necessitates.

In this kairotic moment, queer scholars can be so publicly connected and engaged in remaining resistant and resilient. The resistance that was a catalyst to queer theory's beginnings is still relevant to the current social and political atmosphere, and the resilience necessary to uphold such resistance must persist. Queer literary and rhetorical scholars specifically can resist common canonization by analyzing contemporary texts, like those found on the Internet (e.g., web series, social medias, etc.). There are "traditional" texts like the books, television programs, and films mentioned earlier that demand analysis as well. In other words, there is a plethora of work to be done. With the groundwork of queer theory established in the 1980s and 1990s, contemporary queer theory should resist the self-implosion feared throughout much of its existence to be

resilient not only for today but for the near (and distant) futures. As queer theory expands and develops its focus across the 2020s and beyond, I hope that queer scholars remember the resistance from which their field arose—both socially and academically—and the resilience that has made its continuation possible. That is the rhetoric of hope necessary for moving forward.

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QUEER ASSEMBLAGE IN *RUNNING WITH SCISSORS*

In 2015, Robyn Warhol and Susan Lanser edited and published *Narrative Theory Unbound: Queer and Feminist Interventions,* a collection of essays that interrogate the possibilities of contemporary queer and feminist narratological work. At the core of each writer's essay is the idea that "feminist and queer scholarship, along with other ideologically charged or *identity-focused* inquiries, might benefit in particular from narratology," especially concerning their content and form (Lanser 25; emphasis added).[13] Specific narratological tools include metanarration (Warhol), hypothetical focalization (Phelan), and narrative empathy (Keen) and temporality (Matz). These are applied to a mixture of typical/canonical and atypical texts, ranging from Oscar Wilde's paradigmatic *The Picture of Dorian Grey* to NBC's pop-culture phenomenon *The Office*. While *Narrative Theory Unbound* offers an expansion of queer and feminist narratological scholarship, the range of queer and feminist texts presented do little to move beyond what Lanser claims are "canons that are too narrow" (24) for these fields. What would we even consider qualifications to be within a queer canon? Or, more importantly, what are—using Lanser's words—the queer "content" and "form" that qualifies a text to be within a queer canon? I believe beginning, as some do in *Narrative Theory Unbound*, with the content and form—that is the basic style—of queer narrative,

[13] "Toward (a Queerer and) More (Feminist) Narratology."

we then become able to establish not only queer narratological methods, but also to discover/recover queer texts.

Indeed, I believe that identity and its construction has been and continues to be a prominent concern in scholarship. To question or to analyze identity has, for contemporary scholars, been interrogated by redefining the multiplicity of the term to reflect its more inherent plurality. This is true specifically of work done by Jasbir Puar, who in her essay "'I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess'" discusses assemblage theory as a more fluid framework for identity analysis.[14] Puar bases her conceptualization of assemblage on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's image of assemblage as horizontal and vertical axes that encompass the varying connections made between body and space at any given moment. Analysis of the connections—of the forces that connect the body and space and how they interact to provide meaning to themselves and one another—is done in such an assemblage. There is, also, a deprivileging and expansion of "body" to describe not only human or nonhuman beings but any *entity* that can be seen in some oneness, some coherent unity, such as literature. It is perhaps through assemblage that (especially queer) narrative work can manage the inherent plurality of identity through these connections of entities.

In this paper, I define assemblage and its territorializing forces. In this definition, I show how territorializing forces favor culturally-normative entities and how

[14] That is, as Puar claims, more fluid than Kimberley Crenshaw's "intersectionality." Puar sees intersectionality as a basis of many contemporary scholars' discussions of identity and suggests assemblage theory can alleviate a "gridlocking" effect that may occur in intersectional analysis; she does not see intersectionality as needing replacement, though assemblage(ing) may supplement it.

deterritorializing entities, such as queer, exist through the opposing nonnormative, even bizarre forces. This I apply to Augusten Burroughs's memoir, *Running with Scissors* in which I demonstrate how Burroughs—as author, narrator, and character—narratives his move from "normal" to "queer" ("re-" to "deterritorialized") during his own teenage years, and how it during this dissent that he is able to validate both his own queer/deterritorialized identity and the identity of his text. I ultimately hope to provide a discussion of queer identity construction through queer assemblage, a closer examination of queer content and form through narrative.

To begin, I define assemblage and assemblage theory as introduced by Deleuze and Guattari. Assemblage, or *agencement*, has become an increasingly prominent term in the theorization of identity since Deleuze and Guattari coined the theoretical usage of the term in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). Deleuze and Guatarri envisioned an assemblage as being constructed along horizontal and vertical axes that, as Drew Daniel observes, "[occasion] an expansive vision of bodies and signs as dialectical manifold" (9). These axes compound the bodily and spatial forces that work to generate some assemblage of an identity. The horizontal axis comprises "two segments, one of content, the other of expression…of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another…[and] of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies"; the vertical axis comprises "both *territorial sides*, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialization*, which carry it away" (Deleuze and Guattari 88). In other words, these axes bring together the forces of the experiences and enunciations of a body with and within the inhabited space and, more importantly,

the constraining impositions that space carries. An assemblage, therefore, encompasses the "states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodges…utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs" (Deleuze and Guattari 88). Anything and everything might be a part of (or is) an assemblage because it is the *act* of *assembling* that produces an assembled identity.

The act of assembling derives primarily from the translation of Deleuze and Guattari's original French term, *agencement*. John Phillips translates *agencement* in English as implying "specific connections with other concepts. It is, in fact, the *arrangement* of these *connections* that gives the concepts their sense" (108). The French *agencement* also designates priority to neither the state of affairs nor the statement, but to their connection, which implies the production of an understanding that exceeds those states of affairs and statements individually (Phillips 108). It is, indeed, these "connections," or relations, between concepts and forces that are prioritized in an assemblage rather than their individual implications. This is to say that assemblage uses the connections with other concepts to produce meaning rather than the concepts themselves. As Jasbir Puar explains, "concepts do not prescribe relations, nor do they exist prior to them; rather relations of force, connection, resonance, and patterning give rise to concepts"; assemblages "do not privilege bodies as human, nor as residing within a human animal/nonhuman animal binary…Matter is [also] an actor" (57).

Of course, in order to assemble and examine assemblages, the necessity of language seems most obvious. However, the deprivileging of the human to multiply the "body" re-imagines language not as production of a human body but as a linguistic body

itself. Perhaps this is taken to be, as Manuel DeLanda claims in *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, an effort to "make language last" (16). Instead of a subject naming, linguistically, their attributes, assemblage theory considers attributes such as race, gender, and sexuality as "events, actions, and encounters between bodies" (Puar 58). As Deleuze and Guattari say, assemblages foreground the "event-ness of identity" (106). The prioritization of connections is, again, important here as these "encounters" or linkages between identities produce meaning—and not the identities producing meanings by and for themselves to the other. Processes of territorialization are responsible for collating the meanings produced by the connections of assembled identities. In Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of the processes, reterritorialized forces work to stabilize assemblages while deterritorizled forces work to "carry it away" (88). Territorializatoin then operates as the process through which an assemblage's meaning is produced: through the forces that work to, normatively, generate and stabilize it (re/territorializatioin), and forces that work to destabilize it through the abnormal (deterritorialization). Territorialization thus provides the meaning behind the re/territorializing forces that promote and reward certain entities' connections as they attempt to curtail—or, as I argue, exist in—the ostensibly harmful deterritorializing forces.

Territorialization, as I said, shows the normative and nonnormative forces that structure bodies within in an assemblage. As these words "normative and nonnormative" are most appropriate when describing, respectively, re/territorializing and deterritorializing forces within an assemblage, I am interested in questioning what a

deterritorializing or nonnormative force is, and if "queer" is an appropriate category with which to assemble these forces. In other words, is queer a deterritorializing force that must always be reterritorialized? I believe the short answer, given contemporary queer scholarship, is simply that it is.[15] I believe Lee Edelman specifically would agree, especially since he claims in his book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* that "queer, in the order of the social, is called forth to figure the negativity opposed to every form of social viability" (9). Queer, for Edelman and for most queer scholars, takes this "opposing," or nonnormative, position within a social entity. Queer is a rejection of structures that purport heteronormativity and typical teleological futurity as standard or "true" for proper living within a society. In other words, queer is a sort of jouissance: "a movement beyond the pleasure principle, beyond the distinctions of pleasure and pain, a violent passage beyond the bounds of identity, meaning, and law" (Edelman 25). This is all to say that I see queer, basically, as a nonnormative, indeed deterritorializing, force within assemblage theory, and that a *queer assemblage* is able to particularly explicate the deterritorialzing forces that trigger reterritorialization.

I believe queer assemblage is thus able to analyze the ways in which deterritorializing entities exist with or alongside the reterritorializing entities forcing stabilization upon them. While assemblage theory does not necessarily prioritize either territorializing forces, I want to prioritize queer assemblage's deterritorializing, indeed

[15] There are numerous queer scholars that view queer as inherently nonnormative. See for example and further reading Halperin, Waite, Sedgwick, Hall, Johnson & Henderson, and Dines.

nonnormative, forces in order to analyze their identity. This is to say that in analyzing queer assemblage, I believe we are able to observe *nonnormative* entities being territorialized through *deterritorializing* forces—this is opposite, of course, of *normative* entities being territorialized from the *reterritorializing* forces that force stabilization. Queer assemblage analyzes the ways in which nonnormative entities function through connection(s) to their normative counterparts. Queer assemblage may thus provide analysis of not only the queerness of texts, but also *how* that queerness operates throughout them. Thinking of Lanser's narratological question of queer content and form, I want to use queer assemblage to analyze *how* (that is, through what content and form) is Augusten Burroughs's queerness forced to exist, or come to existence, within *Running with Scissors*. Queer assemblage shall emphasize the instances of *de*territorialization that not only validate Burroughs's queer identity but also demonstrate how this identity is confronted with reterritorialization.

To demonstrate this production, I now turn to Burroughs's *Running with Scissors*. As I mentioned briefly, Burroughs's memoir recounts his teenage years as his coming-of-age story. Burroughs frames his memoir with his mother's mental instabilities that introduced her and Burroughs to psychiatrist Dr. Finch and his family. We follow Burroughs as he lives with the Finches from age thirteen on—a suggestion of Dr. Finch because Burroughs's mother is too unstable. While living with the Finches, Burroughs stops being a self-described clean freak (mostly because of the Finches' Bohemian-like living style), becomes sexually active, and develops a sense of self relatively opposite of his childhood self and those around him. Burroughs notes that he has been aware of his

queerness/homosexuality since he could remember; and, because of this, I see Burroughs as being a deterritorialized entity confronted with the reterritorializing forces surrounding him. Throughout *Running with Scissors*, popular culture, Burroughs's mother, and Dr. Finch constantly impose reterritorialization upon Burroughs—yet I believe it is because of Burroughs's queerness, his deterritorialization, that he not only resists these reterritorializing forces but also exposes the absurdity, and in some cases corruption, of these "normal" people and things. In this sense, Burroughs appears as a queer assemblage and is narrativized through representations within *Running with Scissors*.

The beginning chapters of *Running with Scissors* establish Burroughs's affinity both with the media- and consumerist-saturated culture in which Burroughs grew up during the 1970s. He believes the lifestyle of celebrities to be as glamorous as they appear on television and imagines himself living as if he were famous enough to have a show like *Donny & Marie*. He identifies this glamour as a sort of achievement, especially as he watches his mother get ready: "My mother only wears fancy shoes when she's going out" (2). We see in the beginning, when Burroughs is around twelve, that he is infatuated with his mother's personal actions, and associates this with a fantasy of popularized adulthood he sees through television and media (5-18). For example, Burroughs desires to chain-smoke just like his mother. He wishes he were a flight attendant—one of the fabulous jobs he wants to have when he is older—just so he could tell people to extinguish their smoking materials, "…and I wish I smoked, just so I could extinguish my smoking materials" (3). In this sense, Burroughs sees the adulthood around

him (though primarily through his mother) as chic, desirable, and, most importantly, normal.

Although perhaps many children want "to be famous," Burroughs clearly sees this famous lifestyle as a desirable normativity. "I will aim my desk lamp into the center of the room and stand in its light, looking at myself in the mirror. 'Hand me that box,' I will say to my reflection. 'Something isn't right here'" (8). It is interesting that, in these beginning chapters, Burroughs so explicitly longs to be a normalized celebrity, but does not see this as an impossibility for him as a queer person, especially in the late twentieth century. However, I see his early relationship with fame and media as one of the first instances of a juxtaposition between his queer identity and the normativity surrounding him. We see this in the above quote where Burroughs is simultaneously the celebrity (or star of some hypothetical show) and assistant to himself. These hierarchically diametric positions are obviously juxtaposed once embodied in a single person like Burroughs, yet Burroughs does not see this. Whether or not Burroughs is identifying his own isolation—or, rather, suggesting that his queerness is a comparatively unique experience—it is clear that Burroughs, at this point, is distinguishing himself as a deterritorialized entity, maybe even someone who is able to assist himself to his own fame. Popular culture like television is thus the first reterritorializing force that imposes itself upon Burroughs to assemble his deterritorialized identity, although he is unable to manage such normativity.

While popular culture figures prominently throughout *Running with Scissors* in metaphorical commentary, its reterritorializing forces work as a framing of the memoir as I described. Other reterritorializing forces impose themselves upon Burroughs like his

mother and Dr. Finch. As I said, Burroughs holds a deep love and infatuation for his mother throughout his youth, but these become complicated as her mental instabilities overwhelm her and all of her relationships. Burroughs himself begins to notice his mother's deterioration in the fights that she and his father have—fights that Burroughs finds himself privy to, although he somehow understands that this is inappropriate: "'Can't you two *stop* fighting? You always fight and I hate it.' / 'This is between me and your father,' my mother said coldly. / '*No it's not*,' I shouted with surprising volume. 'It's not just between you because I'm here too. And I can't stand it" (17). Burroughs sees his parents' relationship as volatile because of their disparate personalities; Burroughs's mother is manic and emotional while his father is quiet and apathetic. Both of these are equally disturbing to Burroughs, too. "The problem was, my father's unemotional nature scared me. There was a difference between the calm expression of the man on a jar of Taster's Choice coffee and the blank expression my father wore" (18). While his mother's issues affect him and the memoir more than his father's, Burroughs's relegation of his father to apparent nothingness is important for Dr. Finch's assuming the role later—and to establishing the dominance of Burroughs's mother over his life.

Burroughs finds solace from the disarray of his family life in his appearances—consequential, also, of his interest in celebrities and fame. Burroughs says that "knowing my clothes were ready gave me a sense of calm. I could *control* the sharpness of the crease in my double-knit slacks, even if I couldn't stop my mother from hurling the Christmas tree off the porch like she did one winter" (19). Throughout the beginning of *Running with Scissors*, Burroughs describes ironing clothes crisply, laying these polished

clothes out before he goes to bed, and combing his hair to perfection after dressing each day. As Burroughs says, his appearance was, at this point, one of the only things that he could control. While, like in the quote above, he finds this control over himself as a way of subverting his mother, Burroughs's stringency is still overpowered by her, subsequently redirecting the flow of his life up until this point.

Burroughs's mother, an aspiring poet, complicates his poised life by including him on her search to find help for her mental instabilities. His mother begins meeting with Dr. Finch, a psychiatrist who believes Burroughs's mother is deeply troubled, although exactly how we do not discover (until later when Dr. Finch's corruption surfaces). "[Dr. Finch] certainly didn't seem like a real doctor, the kind of doctor I worshiped [on TV]. He seemed like he should be in a department store letting kids pee on his lap and whisper brand-name bicycles in his ear" (23). Burroughs immediately wants to "worship" Dr. Finch: his nonchalant and open demeanor are definitely different from the insanity of Burroughs's parents. Dr. Finch appears to be the answer both Burroughs and his mother need. We also begin to see Dr. Finch assert himself as a strong reterritorializing force within the narrative; he is a sort of culminating figure of normativity in being an accomplished psychiatrist and an ostensibly good father. Dr. Finch begins working with Burroughs's mother intimately, his mother believing that Dr. Finch shall ultimately help cure her of the general mania that she suffers from. It is Dr. Finch that suggests Burroughs's mother divorces his father and she does this believing Dr. Finch's suggestion is best for both her and Burroughs. This is exciting for Burroughs, too: He thought "Life would be fabric-softener, tuna-salad-on-white, PTA-meeting

normal" (29; emphasis added). Normalcy, however, is not ever achieved through this decision.

Dr. Finch starts to appear at least unconventional after Burroughs's parents' separation—though his position as a competent psychiatrist and parent allows his unconventionality to be normalized. This begins with The Masturbatorium Burroughs finds in Dr. Finch's office; this room dedicated to Dr. Finch's "relaxation time" is where Burroughs finds Dr. Finch's daughter/receptionist, Hope, taking a nap. Burroughs, not having discussed sexuality with either of his parents up until this point (or anyone else for that matter), is horrified. His mother does not consider this extremely appropriate either. But Dr. Finch, perhaps in an effort to normalize his own habits in needing such a room, questions Burroughs, "'What do you think, young man?' [Dr. Finch] said, looking to me. / 'I think you're all crazy,' I said. / 'That's the spirit!' he said, with a chuckle" (35). This is the first instance wherein Burroughs begins to see the unconventionality of Dr. Finch, though Dr. Finch attempts to make his unconventionality appear normal.

In the major turn of the memoir, and Burroughs's life, Dr. Finch suggests that Burroughs's mother needs to live independently for some time, or at least without Burroughs around her. The solution: Burroughs comes to live with the Finches. This is troubling for Burroughs, especially considering the decrepit conditions of the Finch house ("Imagine My Shock"). Dilapidated and in general disrepair, Burroughs is shocked that a psychiatrist—one as apparently great as Dr. Finch—lived in such squalor, much less with his entire family (consisting of his wife, three adult and teenage daughters, and a young son). The Finches, however, do not mind their living conditions at all; in fact, they

embrace the filthy state of their home. Burroughs finds this immediately appalling. No doctor should live in such a disgusting abode, much less subject his family to living in it. Though Burroughs struggles to make sense of how and why the Finches live as they do, it is the *freedom* of their attitudes that he finds appealing. And, though he resists the idea of living with the Finches so that his mother may become healthier, he does finally accept this strange living arrangement. "I was learning that living arrangements needed to remain fluid. And that I shouldn't get too attached to anything. In a way, I felt like an adventurer. And this appealed to my deep need for a sense of freedom" (83). Of course, Burroughs believes this primarily because this comes as a suggestion from Dr. Finch.

Although there are many specific examples as to how Dr. Finch's home is bizarre—patients living in spare rooms, dirty dishes piled in high stacks in the kitchen, a (created) gaping hole in the ceiling—I believe Dr. Finch and his home create a juxtaposition together. While Dr. Finch, as Burroughs believes from first meeting him and then living with him and his family, embodies a normalization in his roles as doctor and father, his lifestyle does not reflect these roles normally. In this sense, Burroughs begins to find that the roles that an individual takes on do not necessarily make normalized actions for that role inherent. This is to say that Burroughs's conception of "doctor" is not performed by Dr. Finch given that he does not own a well-manicured home; he does not perform "father," either because he does not treat his family in a traditional manner.

Dr. Finch does remain reterritorialized through his role as a doctor, which, I believe, becomes apparent through his use of psychological terminology with his family.

Burroughs notes that his "vocabulary had increased dramatically over the past year. *Projection, denial, repression, passive-aggressive, Lithium, Melaril*" (96). While living with the Finches, Burroughs discovers that Dr. Finch encourages his family to employ Freudian theory in their conversations and, more importantly, fights. "In addition to calling each other standard names like *bitch* and *whore*, the Finches incorporated Freud's stages of psychosexual development into their arsenal of invectives. / 'You're so *oral*. You'll never make it to *genital*! The most you can ever hope for is to reach *anal*'" (96). Freudian theory is apparently quite important to Dr. Finch, as when he marches through town on Father's Day celebrating his paternal testicles. This employing of psychosexual stages of development is never done by Burroughs, however; he merely observes the Finches using them. It is interesting that Burroughs never incorporates Freud into his own "arsenal"—but I believe this is a consequence of his own queerness. Dr. Finch, and to a certain extent the Finches generally, take Freudian thought as a means of rationalizing their actions. Of course, Freudian theory's obvious heteronormativity thus makes Dr. Finch and his family relatively extreme reterritorialzing forces. Burroughs's own deterritorialization strongly juxtaposes this as he begins his own stages of sexual development.

Burroughs "comes out" with ease: "[As] free and accepting as the Finches were, I worried about their reaction to my deep, dark secret. The fact that I was gay had never been a big deal to me—I'd known all my life…. 'Big deal,' Hope said when I told her" (69). Burroughs begins dating one of Dr. Finch's former patients turned pseudo-son (similar to Burroughs), Neil Bookman. Burroughs and Bookman enter into Burroughs's

first sexual relationship although Bookman is thirty-three, about twenty years Burroughs's senior at the time. Though their relationship figures sporadically throughout the text, Burroughs primarily focuses on the sexual aspects of it, given it was his first ["The Joy of Sex (Preteen Edition)" (110-118)]. I want to bring their relationship up in light of the use of Freudian theory by the Finches to highlight that Burroughs experiences these first sexual encounters and relationships virtually alone; that is, he processes his relationship with Bookman primarily with himself, though a few times he discusses this with Hope or Natalie (another of Finches daughters with whom Burroughs develops a close friendship). Burroughs also begins writing at this time in a journal. This is the strongest juxtaposition within *Running with Scissors*, and all the more fitting considering it is related to sexuality: While the Finches explicitly discuss and use normative sexuality throughout the text, Burroughs only silently, individually does so.

Thinking about Burroughs's affinity with popular culture (especially the heteronormative popular culture that he consumes through television), the great desire for fame he had not many years before living with the Finches, and having his first sexual encounter, it is certainly unique that he decides to ponder his world reflectively and silently through writing. Instead of publicly expressing himself, as would a reterritorialized celebrity or Finch family member, Burroughs deterritorializes this publicity to the private. And, like his experiencing the impossible duality of celebrity/assistant as he did earlier, in privatizing himself within such an open, reterritorialized atmosphere as the Finches, Burroughs indeed furthers the embodiment of deterritorialization that he began. In a sense, Burroughs's sexual awakening with

Bookman solidifies the deterritorialized identity that he had known existed all of his life. This also indefinitely explodes any possibility of a specific idea of "normal":

> *All I want is a normal life*. But was that true? I wasn't so sure… I was intrigued by the unknown. I was even slightly thrilled that my mother was such a mess. Had I become addicted to crisis? I traced my finger along the windowsill. *Want something normal, want something normal, want something normal*, I told myself (124).

While I have primarily focused on the beginning and pivotal moments within *Running with Scissors*, this is mostly due to the fact that there are numerous examples in which we can see territorialization defining Burroughs's queerness. There are other moments in the memoir that we see territorialization of queerness occur. In fact, there are other queer characters that arise from the memoir: Burroughs finds his mother having sex with a (married) woman neighbor, and, after the neighbor leaves frantically, Burroughs's mother divulges that she herself is a lesbian (85-90); and Bookman, Burroughs's boyfriend, is indeed a developed queer character with Burroughs detailing some of his history and what he believes happened to Bookman after the last time Burroughs saw him. This is to say that I have merely scratched the surface of the possibilities of analyzing the territorialzation of queer assemblage in Burroughs's memoir.

I wanted to demonstrate that through applying queer assemblage to a text, we are able to explicate the territoralizing forces that generate a queer (deterritorialized) identity. Though I did not mention this in defining queer/assemblage, I believe after seeing my basic application of queer/assemblage to *Running with Scissors* that assemblage, especially territorialization, is inherently both queer and non-queer, homo- and

heteronormative. This is to say that, within territorialization, we are able to observe the dichotomy of assemblage, or this binary model of queer and non-queer functioning to produce meaning. Although territorialization, as I have used it, appears as this binary, this is consequential of my simplifying territorialization for this paper's purposes. And, while I have thought of queer as homosexuality, this does not account for the reality that queer also describes transgenderism and other sexualities. In this sense, I have made both the category of queer and of assemblage work for my analysis of Burroughs's queerness within his memoir; I did not consider, say, his gender nor his socioeconomic class though these are both affective.

I am identifying what can be seen as holes in my analysis to show that I did not overlook them but prioritized what was necessary for my own queer assemblage analysis. I say this because the depth and breadth of assemblage theory necessitates some prioritization in the part of the analyzer; and because assemblage offers us many, many possibilities for analysis. I want to return to Warhol and Lanser's project that I began with. I took issue with Lanser's demand for a wider queer canon because I am unable to think of how or why queer might be canonized. I do agree with Lanser, however, that queer's ambiguous content and form prevents its canonization. Though I did not work to canonize *Running with Scissors*, I did work to analyze the possibility of content and form within it. This is to say that I did not, as many of Warhol and Lanser's collected scholars do, employ known narratological tools to Burroughs's memoir for two reasons: (1) I do not think it is necessary when analyzing identity in texts to always use narratological tools; and (2) I believe queer (or queerness) resides in virtually any given text because of

assemblage's territorialization. This is to say that I believe queer speaks for itself; queer content and form exist, and we need not force them out of texts as harshly as some do in *Narrative Theory Unbound*.

I see assemblage theory as one of the possibilities for explicating and examining queer, especially its content and form. In my analysis of *Running with Scissors*, queer was readily defined throughout the text by Burroughs. By applying a queer assemblage, I was able to identify how Burroughs himself formed the content of his deterritorialized identity through the juxtaposition of reterritorializing forces surrounding him. The imposition of (reterritorialized) popular culture, his mother, and Dr. Finch all contributed to Burroughs's ability to accomplish creating such a deterritorialized identity. In this sense, Burroughs formed his queerness through the content within *Running with Scissors*, and I was able to analyze this content through assemblage. Assemblage theory, again, offers us the ability to observe identity in a much more pluralistic vision. The axis of territorialization specifically provides a way of considering the normative and nonnormative forces that surround an identity; this can especially provide a starting point for examining queer identity construction within narrative. As queer scholars like Warhol, Lanser, and those collected in their book continue to discover what exactly are queer forms and contents, I believe we need not look farther than queer texts themselves (or texts wherein queer exists). We should ask queer what it is itself; we should observe queer as it is in order to see its form and content. As assemblage inherently possesses the language to accommodate both territorializing forces (or both queer and non-queer identities), we might turn to this theoretical framework to see what queer is.

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